

Conservation Farmer Accomplishes Goals

Lewis and Barbara Collins, small farmers in the Hampton Station community, own and operate 300 acres with their son-in-law, Douglas Watkins. Their operation consists of 186 acres of cropland, 70 acres of grassland, 10 acres of wetland, and 30 acres of forestland.

Over the years, Mr. Collins has worked with the Montgomery County Soil Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service in developing conservation plans for the operation.

The cropland consists of corn, soybean, and wheat rotation. All tillage operations are performed using reduced and no till methods. Crop residue is left on the surface throughout the year promoting the build up of top soil and minimizing soil erosion. This system helps sustain the productivity of the soil.

Conservation practices on the cropland include crop rotation, crop residue management, nutrient management, grassed waterways, grassed buffers, and field borders. Mr. Collins has participated in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which provided cost share assistance to install grassed buffers. He also established buffers to help protect wetland areas from sediment and nutrient runoff into streams.

They have also installed a rotational grazing system on a 50 acre pasture field which had livestock watering from a single pond and a perennial stream. He developed this 50 acre grazing paddock into a 5 paddock prescribed grazing system that reduced and eliminated watering from the stream. He participated in the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and CRP cost share programs which assisted with implementation of Best Management Practices such as livestock exclusion, cross fencing, riparian development, an alternative livestock watering facility, heavy use area, stream crossings, and a grade stabilization structure. These practices have increased the productive capabilities of forage and also assist with nutrient distribution.

The forested riparian area developed aids in the stability of the water course that drains through the farm. The combination of conservation practices installed on this farming operation has resulted in reduced soil erosion and improved water quality by removing sediment, fertilizers, pesticides, and other pollutants from runoff water that leaves this farm.

One small farmer's goal to make a difference is protecting and improving the natural resources in Montgomery County.



Lewis Collins checks out a buffer on his farm.



Grade stabilization structure on Collins farm.